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A TREATISE CONCERNING The Laying On OF HANDS.

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TREATISE

Concerning the

Laying On of HANDS.

HAving in the preceding Narrative, given an Account of our Faith, in ſome of the moſt weighty Matters of Chriſtianity; and foraſmuch as many of our Brethren, that (with us) do own the general Grace of God to the World, do differ from us about the matter of Laying on of Hands; We ſhall endeavour briefly to give our Reaſons, why we cannot own and practice it, at leaſt as they do: In which we ſhall not in the leaſt reflect upon, or go about to under-value any Man's perſon or parts, that differ from us in this particular, whoſe Perſons we honour, and whoſe Labours we eſteem, as being worthy of the greateſt acceptation; and with whom we could gladly embrace more Chriſtian-Fellowſhip, in the Work, Worſhip, and Service of our God;

and do account ourſelves not a little Unhappy, being ſo near as we apprehend, in the moſt material Points of Chriſtianity, that ſuch a thing as this, ſhould lie as a Bar in the way of our Chriſtian-fellowſhip with thoſe whom we ſo highly honour and eſteem for the Truth's ſake. And in what we may offer to Conſideration in what follows, we ſhall endeavour all Chriſtian Moderation and Forbearance towards thoſe that do not ſee with our eyes: not deſigning to make the Breach wider than it is, but contrariwiſe, to heal it, if it may be within the reach of our narrow Compaſs ſo to do. We look upon it to be but a reaſonable thing, for us to give our Reaſons, why we cannot own and practice, as our Brethren do in this matter, even as reaſonable, as for them to give their Reaſons for their practice; hoping that it may be a means to prevaile with our Friends to be more moderate, and leſs ſevere; and not to make that a Breach of Communion, which if it be a Duty, (which as yet we do not ſee it is) is ſo doubtfully ſtated in the Word of God, that it may admit of a contentious Scruple, as may appear in what follows: The Lord grant that it may have ſo good an effect, that all thoſe that do agree in the moſt material Points of Faith, and have really ſet their faces *Zion* ward, may be labouring together for the Faith of the Goſpel, and be ſetting their hearts and hands to the carrying on of the Lord's Work, and

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not be making Bounds to the Church of Christ, where he hath made none, or be keeping themselves at a distance from those, that it may be, the Lord may own equal with themselves; but we forbear, and proceed to give our Reasons why we cannot practice Imposition of Hands, on all Believers as such, without judging or censuring those that do practice it.

The Reasons why we cannot own Imposition of Hands, on all Believers as such, to be an Ordinance of Jesus Christ, of standing use in his Church, throughout all Ages, as that which is absolutely necessary for all Persons, in order to their entering into Church-Communion and Fellowship, without which we ought not to hold Communion (in the Ordinance of the Supper) with any Person, though otherwise never so well qualified, and fitted for Church-Society and Communion, are as follows:

I. *Reason*, Because we do believe, that every Ordinance that is held and lawfully practised, as a Fundamental Article of our Faith, and a Boundary of Church-Society, is such a one as is some-where commanded or required in the Word of the Lord, or at least for which there is some ordinary Example; and that without some Precept or ordinary Example, we may not take up any thing as a Principle of Christ's Doctrine, or at least not such a one as is a Fundamental Article of our Faith, and a Boundary

to Church-Communion. Now if either of theſe can be found in Scripture, for the practice of Impoſition of Hands on all Believers as ſuch, then we muſt acknowledge ourſelves miſtaken.

II. *Reaſon*, Becauſe we believe, that neither our Lord, nor his Diſciples, were under Hands, when our Lord firſt inſtituted the Supper, *Mat.* 26. 26, 27. and yet they had Communion together; ſurely the Example of our Lord is worthy our Obſervation, he would not hold Communion with thoſe that were not fit to be communicated with. It ſeems very ſtrange to us, had this matter been of ſuch great concern as is pleaded for, that we had not had the Lord's Example for it, as for Preaching, Praying, Baptiſm, the Supper, *&c.* which then in ſuch caſe might have made the matter without juſt cauſe of Doubt. What the reaſon ſhould be, that ſo great care had not been taken in leaving this matter to Poſterity, as in other things, had it been of like importance and continuance, we cannot eaſily imagine.

III. *Reaſon*, Becauſe we cannot underſtand, that ever the Apoſtles were under it at all; for if they had, they muſt have an Adminiſtrator to adminiſter it unto them: And who that ſhould be, we cannot ſuppoſe, but there is nothing ſaid of either in the Scriptures; therefore we conclude, that the Apoſtles were not under Hands; yet they were Communicants, from whence we conclude, That if the Apoſtles were Communicants,

municants, and not under Hands, then it is lawful for us to Communicate with thoſe that are not under Hands, if they be other-ways qualified for it.

IV. *Reaſon,* Why we cannot own Impoſition of Hands, on all Believers as ſuch, to be an Ordinance of the Lord, of ſtanding uſe in his Church, as Baptiſm is, is becauſe we conclude, had the Lord deſigned it as ſuch, there would have been ſome Precept for it, ſome manner of Expreſſion to have been made uſe of in the Adminiſtration of it, as in Baptiſm, and the Lord's Supper; together with ſome Promiſe in the Performance, and Threat in the Non-performance. But neither of theſe is to be found in Scripture, from whence we are perſwaded, that it was never intended by our Lord to be an Ordinance of ſtanding uſe in his Church, as Baptiſm is.

V. *Reaſon,* Becauſe we cannot underſtand, that the Church at *Jeruſalem* were under Laying on of Hands, any otherwiſe, then what is mentioned *Acts* 6. 6. which was for the Ordination of Officers; for the Scripture ſaith nothing of Laying on of Hands, as being practiſed in the Church of Chriſt before: and where the Scripture hath no mouth to ſpeak, we ought not to have an ear to hear; yet we believe, that the Church at *Jeruſalem* was an orderly Church of Chriſt, and for a time continued ſteadfaſt in the Apoſtles Doctrine, and Fellowſhip,

ſhip, in Breaking Bread, and Prayer, *Acts* 2. 42.

VI. *Reaſon*, That confirms us in our preſent Judgment is this, Becauſe we believe, that there is nothing ſtated in the Word of the Lord, which is abſolutely neceſſary to Church Communion, but what is very plainly worded therein; ſo that a mean Capacity in reading and hearing, *&c.* may be capable to underſtand it, and not be left to Interpretations, Inferences, and Suppoſitions; we are not in any wiſe to ſuppoſe Boundaries for the Church of Chriſt, but to take the plain Precepts and Preſidents of God's Word; but this of Impoſition of Hands, is not ſo plainly ſtated; whence we conclude it to be no Boundary to Church Communion.

VII. *Reaſon*, That tends farther, to confirm us in the ſame matter, is becauſe we are ſtrongly inclined to believe, that the Lord did leave no practical Ordinance or Initiation for his Church as abſolutely neceſſary to Communion, but ſuch as do hold forth Figuratively, his Death and Reſurrection, which is very evidently ſet forth in the Ordinance of Baptiſm, which we take to be the great initiating Ordinance into the Church of Chriſt, to be performed next after Faith and Repentance, and is Figurative not only of the Death and Reſurrection of our Dear Redeemer, but alſo of our Duty towards him, both in dying to Sin, and riſing to Newneſs of Life; as likewiſe of our own Death and

and Reſurrection to a new Life and State in Glory; but none of all theſe are held forth in Laying on of Hands: So likewiſe the Ordinance of the Supper is Figurative of the Breaking of the Body, and Shedding of the Blood of the Lord for Sinners, and preſents us with his dying Love. But there being nothing of this, in Laying on of Hands, we cannot ſee ſufficient ground to lay ſuch a ſtreſs upon it as ſome do, *(viz.)* to hold no Communion with thoſe that do not practice it.

VIII. *Reaſon*, Is this. Becauſe the Lord hath promiſed Salvation on the Terms of Faith, Repentance, and Baptiſm; from whence we conclude, that there is nothing more needful, in order to Church-Communion; from whence we argue thus: If Faith, Repentance, and Baptiſm, doth give Perſons a lawful Right to Salvation, then they do alſo to Church-Communion. But Faith, Repentance, and Baptiſm doth give Perſons a lawful Right to Salvation; *Ergo*, ſo it doth to Church-Communion; the Major is evident, the Minor we prove from theſe Texts of Scripture, *Mar.* 16. 16. *Acts* 16. 31. & 2. 38.

IX. *Reaſon*, Is becauſe that when the Apoſtles did lay on Hands for the Gifts of the Spirit, extraordinary effects did follow, as is evident from theſe inſtances, 1. That in the 8th of the *Acts*, it's ſaid that when *Simon* ſaw, through laying on of the Apoſtles hands, the Holy

Holy Ghoſt was given, &c. by which we may underſtand, that either *Simon* ſaw ſome viſible appearance come down upon the People, or elſe he ſaw ſome ſudden Change in and among them, ſo that they appeared after the laying on of the Apoſtles hands, to be another manner of People then they were before. (2.) That in the 19th of the *Acts*, the effects of the laying on of *Paul*'s hands was, that they ſpake with tounges and propheſied: By which it doth appear, that what followed the laying on of the Apoſtle's hand, was more than ordinary, or common Gifts, which Gifts never failed as an effect of the laying on of the Apoſtles hands, but have ever failed ſince, as an effect of the laying on of the Hands of any elſe; from whence we are greatly perſwaded, that the Apoſtles did it as an act of mighty Power, rather then an inſtituted Ordinance, of ſtanding uſe in the Church of Chriſt; and if ſo, then this ought to be no Bar to Church-Communion.

X. *Reaſon*, Is becauſe we find that ſome times God did give the Holy Spirit without laying on of Hands, *Act.* 2. 2, 3. & 10. 44. And then we cannot find that they did come under Hands afterward; yet thoſe we read of, *Act.* 10. 44. that received the Gifts of the Spirit, on *Peter*'s Miniſtry, muſt be baptized afterwards; but nothing ſaid of Laying on of Hands, whence we are ready to infer, that Laying on of Hands is not an Ordinance of ſtanding uſe in the Church

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(as Baptiſm is) without which, Perſons cannot be orderly Members thereof. And if ſo, then it ought not to be a barr to Church-Communion. And foraſmuch as the Spirit was given ſometimes without laying on of Hands; and when it was ſo, then (the end being anſwered) Hands was not impoſed: Whether or no the Perſon that is imployed as an Adminiſtrator in this matter, had not need be capable infallibly to determine, whether the Perſon he lays his Hands upon, have, or have not received the Spirit of God? for in caſe he have received the Spirit without laying on of Hands; then we ſuppoſe Hands ought not to be impoſed; for it's given as a ſpecial Reaſon, why the Apoſtles laid Hands on thoſe in *Samaria* [for as yet the Holy Ghoſt was fallen on none of them] *Act.* 8. 16. And thoſe we read of *Act.* 19. had not heard whether there were any Holy Ghoſt, or no; now where we ſhall find a Perſon in theſe days ſo infallibly gifted, we cannot imagine.

XI. *Reaſon*, Is, becauſe whenever we find it done in the Scripture, that ſpeaks thereof, we find the Perſons that did it, was ſuch as was eminently gifted; we never read in Scripture of any that did undertake to lay on Hands, for the Gifts of the Spirit, but ſuch as was immediately called to their Office, by their, and our Lord and Maſter Jeſus Chriſt; none but the Apoſtles did it; no, not *Philip*, tho' an ordained Elder, and an Evangeliſt, and had the Power of working many Miracles; yet he touches not with this matter:

and

and as none but Apoſtles did it, ſo it was only ſuch of them as was moſt eminent, namely *Peter* and *John*, and *Paul*, Perſons that were extraordinarily gifted, and had the Power of extraordinary Miracles; and it does not appear by any Scripture Record, that ever it was practiſed in the Churches, by any of the ſucceeding Miniſtry, from whence we dare not to meddle with it, unleſs there were to be found amongſt us, Perſons ſutably gifted and qualified for ſuch an Undertaking as they were; for we look upon it to be one of the greateſt demonſtrations of the mighty Power the Lord had conferred upon them, equal with, if not exceeding that of raiſing of the Dead, given as a witneſs to the truth of their Doctrine, *Heb.* 2. 4. God alſo bearing them witneſs both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts (or Diſtributions) of the Holy Spirit, which we take to intend thoſe miraculous Diſtributions of the Holy Spirit, by the Hands of the Apoſtles, as a witneſs of God to their Doctrine, as the other Miracles were, and as alone Apoſtolical: So that from hence we conclude, That there is no more ground (for any now) to lay on Hands on baptized Believers, becauſe the Apoſtles did it, than there is ground (for any now) to attempt to do the other Miracles, becauſe the Apoſtles did them; much leſs to make either of formal uſe; the Form adds nothing without the Power, eſpecially in ſuch a caſe as this, when the formal Act was uſed only in way of Power. From

From all which Conſiderations we muſt ſay, That we dare not meddle with this matter, having no Authority (as we conceive) from the Lord for it; How can we do it in his Name, without his Authority?

But foraſmuch, as *Heb.* 6. 1, 2. together with the latter end of the 5th Chapter is made much uſe of by our Friends, that differ from us in this matter, and a Precept from thence endeavoured to be proved; it may not be amiſs (before we conclude) a little to enquire into it, that ſo we may ſee whether it be poſſible, from any thing that is ſaid in theſe Chapters, to prove Impoſition of Hands on all Believers as ſuch, to be a Fundamental Article of Chriſt's Doctrine, or one main Pillar of Chriſtianity, tho' we do readily grant, that when ſo many learned, godly, and judicious Men, have ſpoken their Judgments in the matter, it may be thought altogether needleſs for us to ſpeak ours; yet notwithſtanding having made it our buſineſs to ſearch and conſult the place, not being willing to take things wholly upon truſt from other Men; eſpecially when of ſuch great moment, as every Fundamental Principle of Chriſt's Doctrine muſt needs be. Amongſt the many that have ſpoken their Judgments about the matter, we ſhall briefly ſpeak ours; yet not allowing our ſelves to be over-confident of our own Underſtandings, but ſo far as we may with a good Conſcience ſubmit to thoſe that are of better Judgment. But to come to the

the matter, it may not be amiſs to conſider, (1.) The Perſons the Author is ſpeaking to, which was the Church of Chriſt at *Jeruſalem*. (2.) The Circumſtances under which they were, reſpecting not only their Principles, but their preſent ſtate: And as to this we may find, that notwithſtanding they did believe, (*viz.*) That Jeſus was the true *Meſſiah*, and in that Faith was united as a Church of Chriſt; yet we find that they (or at leaſt ſome of them) was ſtill greatly enclined to the Law of *Moſes*, (*viz.*) Circumciſion, and other Moſaical Rites to the Legal Prieſthood, and Sacrifices, *&c.* which in effect did deny Chriſt to be come in the Fleſh, and ſo deſtroy the Foundation of all Goſpel Faith and Practice.

That this is truth will appear moſt evident, if the Scriptures that give light in this matter, be conſidered, *Act.* 15. 1. where we may read, that ſome that went out from the Church at *Jeruſalem*, taught the Believers amongſt the Gentiles, that except they were circumciſed, and did keep the Law of *Moſes*, they could not be ſaved: from whence it is evident, that not only ſome of them was greatly inclined to the Old Covenant, but that ſome that did profeſs themſelves to be Teachers was ſo: But to be ſhort, That which makes the matter yet more plain, is this: When the matter came to be debated among the Apoſtles and Elders, *ver.* 7. we find they had much diſputation, which argues that they were not all of one mind, but that ſome were inclined to it, e-

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ven among the Apoſtles and Elders; for had they been unanimous, what need any Diſputations? the like is evident from *Act.* 21. 20. where we have it expreſly declared, That there were many thouſands of the *Jews* that did believe, that were all zealous of the Law. And the like from the Apoſtle to the *Galatians*, read and ponder, *chap.* 2. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. may we not with half an eye ſee as much as this, that the *Jews* notwithſtanding they did believe, yet was too much wedded to the Ceremonies of the Law; Elſe, why ſhould *Peter* ſeparate himſelf from the Gentiles, for fear of them that was of the Circumciſion? And why ſhould *Paul* reprove him, and contend ſo earneſtly as in *ver.* 16. that a Man is not juſtified by the Works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt? Surely he would not ſo ſtifly contend againſt what no Man aſſerted, or affirm what no Man denied; from whence we may obſerve three Things.

1. That the *Jews* did not underſtand (or at leaſt not ſo clearly as they ought to have done) the Great Deſign of God, in abrogating the Old Covenant, with all its Rites and Ceremonies.

2. That they did not look upon themſelves to be ſafe, as to their Eternal ſtate, without the Obſervation of the Law of *Moſes*.

3. That they were greatly clouded in their Apprehensions in this great Gospel-Truth.

Namely, that Justification was to be obtained by Faith in Christ, without the Deeds of the Law.

This seems likewise to appear from the main drift of the Author to the *Hebrews*: for his great design seems to be this, (*viz.*) To take them off from the Ceremonies of the Law, that so they might not in any wise depend upon them in point of Justification (which, as appears by what hath been before minded, they were exceeding apt to do). And this the Author does, by shewing the changing of the Priesthood, and the Covenant itself; together, with the Unprofitableness of these Ceremonies, and their great inability to do what they expected from them.

The Author in the entrance to this Epistle wisely lays the Foundation to his Building, *chap.* 1. & 2. he is signifying God's speaking to the World by his Son, together with the Exaltation of the Son; to wit, our Lord Jesus Christ, above the Angels; and *chap.* 3. above *Moses*; probably for this reason, because the Law was given to *Moses*, by the disposition of Angels; his design being to shew the changing of the Covenant, comes in order to it: In the first place to speak of the Excellency of that most worthy Person, in whose Hands the New Covenant

venant is eſtabliſhed. In the latter end of the Third Chapter, and the beginning of the Fourth, he comes to ſhew the abſolute neceſſity of Faith, in order to the entering into Reſt, probably for this Reaſon; becauſe the *Jews* might come greatly ſhort in this matter, and might not have ſuch dependance upon Faith in Chriſt, in the great matter of Juſtification, as they ought to have had, *chap.* 4. 14, 15, 16 *verſes*, together with almoſt all the Fifth Chapter, he treats diſtinctly of the Prieſtly Office of our Lord; in which he ſhews him to be a great High-Prieſt; far exceeding thoſe under the Law, called of God, an High-Prieſt forever, after the Order of *Melchiſedec*, chap. 5. 10. Of whom (ſaith the Apoſtle) we have many things to ſay, and hard to be uttered, ſeeing ye are dull of hearing; for when for the time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God; and are become ſuch as have need of Milk, and not of ſtrong Meat, *ver.* 11, 12.

Here it is ſomewhat neceſſary to enquire, what the Author intends by the Firſt Principles of the Oracles of God: Which be theſe Principles? Or what firſt Principles they be, that the Author is pointing at in the Words under Conſideration? And the rather we think it meet to ſay ſomething to it, becauſe we find that the

great ſtrength of almoſt all the Arguments inſiſted upon by our Brethren, that own and practice Impoſition of Hands on all Believers as ſuch, by which to prove that, That Laying On of Hands, mentioned *chap.* 6. 2. is, what they practiſe on baptized Believers; they concluding, that by the Firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, is intended thoſe Principles that are mentioned, *chap.* 6. 1, 2. (to wit) Repentance from dead Works, Faith towards God, the Doctrine of Baptiſm, and of Laying On of Hands, the Reſurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment.

Now, that ſo the truth may appear, it will not be altogether unneceſſary to conſider, in what reſpect it was, that this People (to wit, the Church of the *Hebrews*) was dull of Hearing, needed to be inſtructed; was weak, and ſo in reſpect of weakneſs did reſemble Babes. Now, that the Author doth not intend the Principles before ſpecified, we ſhall give our Reaſons.

1. Becauſe we do not find the Author blaming of them, for that they was dull of Hearing, in thoſe things, but rather that they were ſo; in or about ſomething that did particularly concern the Perſon, or Offices of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *ver.* 11. Coucerning whom we have many things to ſay, and hard to be uttered, ſeeing ye are dull of hearing.

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2. Becauſe we do not find the Author in the ſucceeding part of this Epiſtle, to be inſiſting on theſe Principles; ſurely had theſe been they that he intended by the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, in the which they needed again to be taught. In reaſon we may think that his great Work had been particularly to have taught them in thoſe Principles, and to have inſiſted upon them only by one, to have taught them their Nature, and the great neceſſity of them, in the great matter of Juſtification, before the Lord: but he doth not, therefore it ſeems very probable to us, that it was not thoſe Principles, in which they had ſo much need again to be inſtructed; and ſo that it is not theſe that he intends, by the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, it would argue the Author to be very weak, not to teach them in thoſe things, in which they wanted to be taught. To conclude them to be Babes, that ſtood in need of Milk, and that could not bear ſtrong Meat; and yet would not feed them with Milk, but rather with ſtrong Meat, ſeems beneath the Wiſdom of an ordinary Man, much more beneath the Wiſdom of ſuch a worthy Author, ſurely this could not be the way to lead them on to Perfection; but rather to lead back to deſtruction, it's always the Care of Parents that are Judicious, and tender of their

Children, to feed them with ſuch Meat, as is proper for them; otherwiſe, they hazard not only the Health, but alſo the Lives of their Children. Surely, ſuch was the Care of the Apoſtle, that he did always ſtudy to find out the moſt proper means, whereby to ſtrengthen Souls in the way of the Lord; and ſuch his Wiſdom, that he never acted otherwiſe.

So far to the Negative, which may be ſufficient to ſhew, that Men may miſtake, even in their Concluſions, about what is intended by the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God.

But in the Second place having conſidered, what it is not, it may be expected that we ſhould ſhew what is intended by the Author, by the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God; but as in the former, ſo in this we ſhall not be over poſitive, but briefly give our thoughts about it, and ſo leave it to the ſerious Conſideration of the Judicious Reader.

I. Negatively, we do not underſtand the Author in the words under conſideration, by firſt Principles to intend all that may be proper to the beginning of a Chriſtian; but rather do think that he intends ſome in particular, which did in an eſpecial manner concern thoſe, to whom

whom the Words was ſpoken, under the Circumſtances they then were ; in which they come ſhort more (it may be) then in the other Principles of Chriſtianity.

II. Affirmatively, we apprehends that the Author in the Words now in hand, by firſt Principles do intend ſuch as theſe : Namely,

1. That God by Jeſus Chriſt (who is exalted above Angels, and above *Moſes*) had eſtabliſhed a New Covenant, *Heb.* 8. 6, 7, 8.

2. That when this New Covenant was eſtabliſhed, the Old Covenant with its Circumciſion, Prieſthood, Sacrifices, *&c.* did utterly terminate, and ceaſe to be any longer a Miniſtration, *chap.* 7. 12. 18.

3. That now Jeſus Chriſt was, and is the alone High-Prieſt ; and that there was, nor is no other way to come to God, but by Him ; He being the great, and alone Propitiation, or Peace-making Sacrifice, between God and Man, *chap.* 7. 25, 26, 27.

4. That Juſtification under the Goſpel, or New Covenant was, and is to be obtained, by Faith in the Blood of Chriſt, without the deeds of the Law, *Rom.* 3. 24, 25. Which is call'd a new and living way, *Heb.* 10. 20, 21, 22. Now that theſe are firſt Principles, we ſuppoſe, will not be denied ; or if they be de-

nied to be ſo to us, yet we ſuppoſe that they cannot rationally be denied to be ſo to them, cónſidering the Circumſtances under which they were.

Now that theſe Principles before ſpecified, are for ſence and ſubſtance what the Author intends in the Scripture before-named, we ſhall endeavour to make manifeſt, both from Scripture and Reaſon.

1. Becauſe we find theſe Principles before-named to be ſuch, in which the *Hebrews* had great need again to be taught: There is nothing more evident than this, that the *Jews* was exceeding dull of hearing, in matters of this kind; ſo that when, for the time, (*viz.*) of their ſtanding in the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity) they ought to have been Teachers, they had need that one ſhould teach them again, theſe firſt Principles of the Oracles of God; and were become ſuch as had need of Milk, and not of ſtrong Meat, *ver.* 11, 12.

2. *Reaſon* that tends to confirm us in our preſent Judgment is this, That we find the Author making it his great buſineſs, in the ſucceeding part of this Epiſtle, to be opening and explaining theſe things unto them; and doth very largely prove, that the Old Covenant, with its Circumciſion, Prieſthood, Sacrifices, *&c.* was now ceaſed to be any longer a Miniſtration; and

and that God had ſet up, and eſtabliſhed a New Covenant upon better Promiſes, in the hands of another Mediator, *&c.* for the truth of which read and ponder the 7, 8, 9 & 10 Chapters, which do evidently prove the truth of what is ſaid before; and alſo makes this evident, that thoſe Principles before ſpecified, together with thoſe that do naturally depend upon them, are the Principles intended by the Author, in the fore-mentioned Scripture; for we cannot imagine how to find out a better way, by which to know what Principles they are, that the Author doth intend (in which he ſaith, they needed again to be taught) than this, namely, to make a diligent Search, and a thorough Examination what Principles they are, in which he doth inſtruct them: for we may take this for granted, that he doth inform them in thoſe things in the which they ſtood in moſt need of Information, this being the likelieſt way to lead them on to Perfection, which was his Deſign. Now foraſmuch as we find the Author in the main drift of moſt of the ſucceeding Chapters, to bend himſelf greatly this way; as have been before named, and not medling with thoſe ſix Principles; we are ſtrongly of the mind, that it muſt of neceſſity be ſome other firſt Principles intended by him, (namely, thoſe before-mentioned) and not thoſe ſix mentioned *chap.* 6. 1, 2.

In the next place we ſhall a little touch upon the Entrance of the Sixth Chapter, that having rela-

relation to the ſame matter, as is manifeſt by the word therefore: Therefore (ſaith the Author) leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, let us go on unto Perfection. As much as if he had ſaid thus: The caſe being ſo with you, that you do need again to be taught in the (or ſome of the) firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, that you are become ſuch as have need of Milk, and let us leave for the preſent, what may not be altogether ſo pertinent to the preſent occaſion, and let us go forward to be treating of ſuch things that you at preſent do, in an eſpecial manner need to be inſtructed in, *ver.* 3. And this will we do, if God permit, (theſe words, Not laying again the foundation, ſeems to be brought in to avoid a miſtake, that might poſſibly ariſe in the minds of ſome; as much as if he had ſaid, I would not be miſtaken, I am not about to lay again the Foundation, that is beſides my preſent purpoſe) his Reſolution, it ſeems, was to do his endeavour, to lead them on to perfection; that is to ſay, to be teaching and inſtructing them in thoſe things in which they were greatly ignorant, and ſo needed teaching, this being the likelieſt way to lead them to Perfection, as we noted before; the Author conſidering them to be Babes, in ſome firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, feeds them with Milk ſutable to their Nature; the reaſon of which he gives us, *ver.* 4. for it is impoſſible for thoſe that were once enlightned, and have taſted of the heavenly Gifts, *&c.*

if

if they fall away, to renew them again to Repentance, (*viz.*) if they fall from the Foundation) seeing they Crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open Shame: The Author not only in some expressions before, but also in these, seems to be under some Doubts, or Fears concerning them: and very probably it might be in this respect, namely, that they was so much wedded to the Ceremonies of the Law, (to wit) Circumcision and other Mosaical Rites, that they was in danger of falling from the Foundation, *viz.* Jesus Christ. To expect Justification and Salvation from their legal, or old Covenant Works; and in case they did so, then they were fallen from the Foundation on which they ought to have built, all their Faith and Hope; and did in a sence Crucifie to themselves the Son of God a fresh, &c. How dangerous it is to be looking for Justification by Law, see the words of the Apostle, *Gal.* 5. 2, 3, 4. *Behold, I Paul say unto you, That if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing: For I testifie again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole law. Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from Grace.* Now to prevent this eminent danger, the Author resolves to lay forth himself to the uttermost, as may appear in the succeeding part of this Epistle, in which he shews them the great weakness and unprofitableness

ableneſs of all the Ordinances and Ceremonies of the Law, in the great matters of Sanctification and Juſtification, they being all but Typical, to continue but for a time; even tell the times of Reformation, and Chriſt the great Anti-type ſhould come, then all thoſe things, which was but typical and ſhaddowiſh, was to vaniſh away, *Chap.* 9. 10, 11. And that now Chriſt was come, and the new Covenant was eſtabliſhed, from henceforth, the alone way to obtain Juſtification and Acceptation before the Lord, is by Faith in the Blood of Chriſt, *Chap.* 10. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. Much more might be ſaid to this matter, but we have already exceeded our intended Brevity, we ſhall therefore return to ſpeak a word or two more particularly to the firſt and ſecond Verſe, and ſo ſhall haſten to a Concluſion; *Ver.* 1. Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, (or as the Margin reads it, the Word of the Beginning of Chriſt) which probably we may underſtand thus, *(viz.)* That He that was born of the Virgin, (to wit) the Man Chriſt Jeſus, is the *Meſſiah* promiſed, the Son, and ſent of God, he that was to come into the World; and that we do not look for another; which very probably may be likewiſe intended in the word Foundation, which ſeems to be brought in to avoid a miſtake that might ariſe in the minds of ſome, as we noted before: So that to leave the Word of the Beginning of Chriſt, and not to lay a-

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gain the Foundation, (*viz.*) of all Goſpel-Faith and Practice) may very probably intend the ſame thing; for the Word of the Beginning of Chriſt, as explained before, (*viz.*) that he that was born of the Virgin is the true *Meſſiah*, is that which is laid as the Foundation of all Goſpel-Faith and Worſhip; and other Foundation can no Man lay, 1 *Cor.* 3. 11. The denial of which overthrows the whole Fabrick. From whence we are inclined to believe, that the word (Foundation) hath a peculiar relation to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is the Foundation, and not to thoſe Principles after named: for the Author doth not ſay, not laying again the Foundation, namely, Repentance from dead Works, Faith towards God, &c. but not laying again the Foundation of thoſe things; The Foundation was laid before, and therefore it might be needleſs for the Author to do it again. So that it's very apparent that there a diſtinction, to be made between the Foundation and thoſe Principles, even as much as there is to be made between the Foundation and the Building that is built thereupon. So that theſe ſix Principles, (to wit) Repentance from dead Works, Faith towards God, the Doctrine of Baptiſm, laying on of Hands, Reſurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment, are ſo far from being the Foundation, that they are but a part of the Building founded thereupon. Chriſt is the Foundation, as we ſaid before, and all Goſpel-Faith

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and Works, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are built upon this Foundation. But if we take the words as they lye in the Text, *(viz.)* Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, let us go on to Perfection, and underſtand the Author by Principle, *&c.* to intend thoſe after named; yet this makes little for our Brethren that oppoſe us in this matter, for then it will follow, that it muſt needs be thoſe Principles that he reſolves to leave, to wit, in his preſent Diſcourſe) which argues that they are not ſo proper to the preſent occaſion: So that then either we muſt ſuppoſe the Church of the *Hebrews*, to be ſo well educated in thoſe Principles, as that they had no need to be taught them again, or that thoſe Principles were ſtrong Meat, no ways ſutable to their preſent neceſſity, conſidered as Babes in a declining State: either of which makes as little againſt us, as it does for thoſe that oppoſe us. From what hath been ſaid, we ſee little reaſon why our Brethren ſhould underſtand this matter to be of ſuch great concern as they do, *(viz.)* to make it a Boundary to Church-Communion, or why they ſhould give it ſuch Titles as theſe, namely, one of the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God: Milk for Babes; a part of the Foundation, or a Foundation-Principle, a main Piller of Chriſtianity: and from what hath been ſaid, it may appear, that the Scriptures knows no ſuch Language. The Author to the

Hebrews

Hebrews gives no ſuch Titles to it, or if he does, then we muſt acknowledge, that we do greatly miſ-underſtand the ſcope of that Epiſtle. So that (according to our preſent apprehentions) the moſt that from the Scripture before named in the *Hebrews*, can be ſaid whereby to prove Impoſition of Hands on all Believers as ſuch, to be an Ordinance of ſtanding uſe in the Church as Baptiſm is, is this, that Laying on of Hands is reckoned among other great Principles of Chriſtianity, but what Laying on of Hands, that is the Author doth not determine, whether it be Laying on of Hands for the Gifts of the Spirit, or for Healing, or for Ordination, it may poſſibly be the latter, for we find that was practiſed in that Church, *Acts* 6. 6. Yet if it ſhould be granted, that it's that Laying on of Hands which was practiſed by the Apoſtles for the Gifts of the Spirit, that is intended, and no other. Yet then it may be a great queſtion, Whether or no, it be a Principle to be believed only, but not practiced? Or whether it ought both to be believed and practiced? Neither may it be ſafe to conclude, that foraſmuch as the Author reckons them together, therefore they are each of like importance: We ſuppoſe none to be ſo ignorant, as to imagine it to be as dangerous to deny the Principle of Laying on of Hands, as it would be to deny the Principle of the Reſurrection of the Dead.

So

So earnestly desiring that the Matter may be impartially considered by those whom it does concern, hoping it may be a Word that may tend to occasion greater Moderation; we commend it to the Lord, and to the serious consideration of the Judicious Reader.

FINIS.